

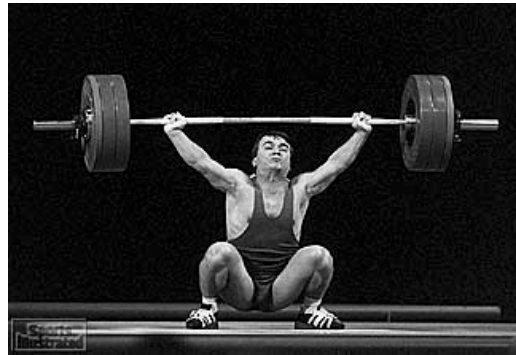
What is Olympic Weightlifting?

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Weightlifting is a competitive strength sport in which men and women compete at the highest level – the Commonwealth and the Olympic Games. Modern Olympic-style weightlifting consists of two lifts – the *snatch* and the *clean and jerk*. In the *snatch*, the weight is lifted from the floor to above the head in one movement, whereas in the *clean and jerk* the bar is lifted over head in two movements – first to the shoulders (the *clean*) and then overhead (the *jerk*).

Who is Weightlifting For?

As the name suggests, Olympic Weightlifting is the form of weightlifting held at the Olympic Games. While the sport offers the chance to win great sporting accolades, Olympic Weightlifting is also practiced by many for health, fitness and enjoyment. Despite the preconceptions that weightlifting solely tests brute strength, Olympic weightlifting is multi-factorial, involving technical skill, flexibility and speed as well as strength. Because of this, many body types are suited to the sport.



Competitive Olympic Weightlifting is split into several weight class categories. This ensures that a wide range of people are able to compete against athletes at their own level. Currently, there are eight weight classes for men, ranging from *under 56kg* to *over 105kg* and seven for women, from *under 48kg* to *over 75kg*.

Weightlifting and Veganism

As with all strength sports, a well-planned vegan diet is perfectly conducive to competitive Olympic Weightlifting. Provided measures are adopted to ensure adequate nutrition (please see leaflet **Vegan Nutrition**) there is no reason why the future cannot hold great vegan Olympic Weightlifters. Although at present vegan Olympic lifters are scarce, it is only time before successful vegan weightlifters show what a cruelty-free diet is capable of. Such success has already been achieved by vegan lifter Jane Black, who has set International master's records in Olympic Weightlifting – showing not only that vegans can succeed in the sport, but that Olympic lifting is open to both male and female athletes of all ages!

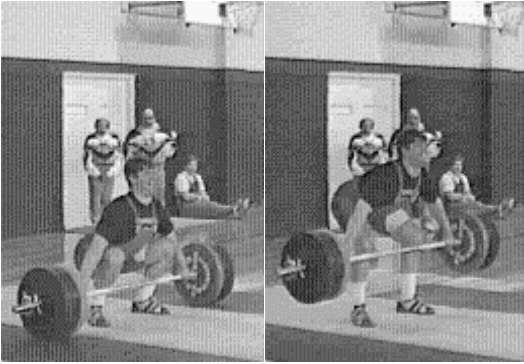
Training and Technical Aspects of Olympic Weightlifting

As Olympic Weightlifting is a highly technical sport, it is imperative that prospective athletes find reliable coaches. When practiced correctly, Olympic Weightlifting is an enjoyable and remarkably safe activity. However, incorrectly executed movements can do a great deal of damage. Therefore, all information provided is for interest only. If you are interested in trying out Olympic Weightlifting, please contact the British Weightlifting Association for details of coaching in your area (see address on back page).

Training for Olympic Weightlifting involves a variety of assistance exercises, designed to develop strength, skill, speed and flexibility – the vital ingredients for any prospective lifter. The majority of these exercises are based on the two lifts of Olympic Weightlifting – the *snatch* and the *clean and jerk*.

The Snatch

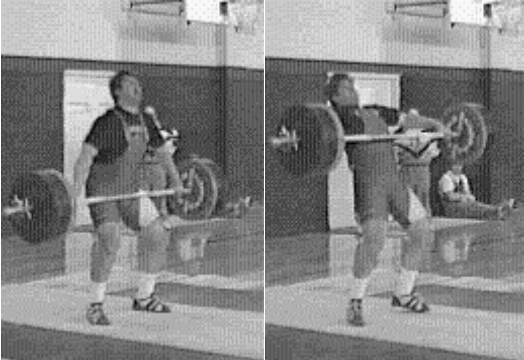
Although the snatch is one fluid movement, it can be, for learning purposes, divided into four distinct movements:



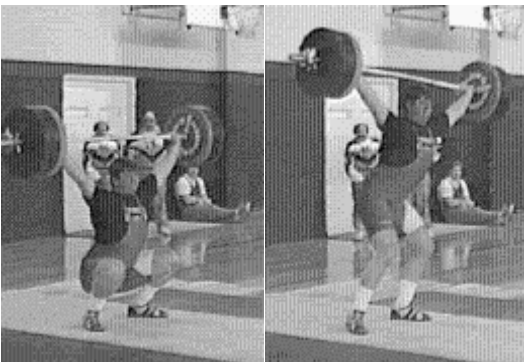
1. Firstly, standing with his or her toes directly under the bar, the lifter bends to hold to bar with arms out wide (about the distance from elbow to elbow when the arms are held perpendicular to the body). The back and arms remain straight, and the shoulders should be forward of the bar. Once in this correct starting position, the lifter pulls the bar off the floor while pushing backwards with the knees so that the bar can rise vertically.



2. Once the lifter has pulled the bar to just above the knees, the knees move forward once more. Keeping the back straight and shoulders over the bar, the lifter explosively drives upwards, pulling the bar to hip height.



3. Having finished the 'pull', the lifter then jumps under the bar to catch it overhead in a deep squat position. In order to successfully get under large weights, it is imperative that the lifter is able to comfortably and quickly execute a deep squat. At this stage, it is also important that a lifter is able to hold the weight firmly overhead with the arms straight. If the lifter does not manage to 'lock out' his or her elbows as soon as the bar has reached arms length, the lift will be disqualified.



4. In the final stage of the *snatch*, having successfully caught the bar overhead in a squat position, the lifter pushes up out of the squat until the knees are locked, the feet are in line, and the body is standing motionless.

The Clean and Jerk

As mentioned previously, the *clean and jerk* is broken into two stages – not surprisingly, the first of these two stages of the lift is known as the *clean*, and the second stage is known as the *jerk*.



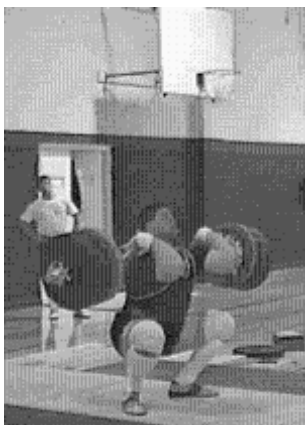
1. Firstly, the lifter, with his or her toes directly under the bar (as in the *snatch*) bends down to grip the bar. Hands are slightly wider than shoulder width. Throughout the lift, the back must be kept straight. With the arms kept straight, the lifter pulls the bar off the floor, pushing the knees backward at the same time.



2. Once the bar is lifted past the knees, the knees come slightly forward once more. The lifter then drives upward explosively keeping the arms straight.



3. When the pull is finished (when the bar has reached the top of the thighs), the lifter pulls his or herself under the weight to catch the bar in a low squat position. The weight is fixed firmly on the shoulders and the elbows are held high.



4. Finally, the lifter drives up out of the clean, ready for the jerk.



5. Once standing, the lifter begins the *jerk* element of the *clean and jerk* by dipping down slowly, keeping the torso vertical.

6. The body is then violently driven upwards, so that the lifter rises up onto his or her toes and the bar begins to rise in the air.



7. As soon as the bar leaves the shoulders, the lifter drives him or herself under the bar by splitting his or her legs apart. The weight is held overhead with straight arms locked out at the elbows. The knee of the front leg must not be positioned over the ankle, and the back leg should be bent at the knee with the heel off the floor.



8. Finally, the lifter stands up out of the lift by first bringing his or her front leg back and then stepping forward with the back leg. When the lifter stands with feet inline and the weight steady, the lift is deemed complete.

(NB: while it is most common for the *jerk* to be executed in a 'split' fashion, and for the *squat* and *clean* movements to be based on a 'squat' technique, this is not absolutely necessary, and variation in lifting technique does occur. For more information on the best lifting technique for you, please contact a qualified Olympic Weightlifting coach.

Contacts

Olympic Weightlifting is a highly rewarding and surprising accessible sport. It, like many other sports, is perfectly suitable for athletes consuming a vegan diet. If you would like to find out more about Olympic Weightlifting, please contact the British Weight Lifter's Association. Good luck and happy lifting!

BRITISH WEIGHT LIFTERS ASSOCIATION

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